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**To:** Dunn, Alexandra [dunn.alexandra@epa.gov]  
**Subject:** Beekeepers sue EPA over sulfoxaflor renewal

## **Beekeepers sue EPA over sulfoxaflor renewal**

By Liz Crampton

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Beekeepers sued the EPA on Friday over its decision to expand use of an insecticide shown to be harmful to bees.

The Pollinator Stewardship Council and American Beekeeping Federation, represented by the environmental group Earthjustice, are asking the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit to review the EPA decision.

The agency in June announced that sulfoxaflor, an insecticide, can be applied to a range of crops from alfalfa to citrus. After conducting additional research, EPA determined that when sulfoxaflor is used according to label directions, the insecticide poses no significant risk to human health. The EPA also said it has a "significantly" lower risk to wildlife such as bees, birds, mammals and fish when compared to widely used registered alternatives.

Still, EPA put in place limitations on sulfoxaflor's use. It can't be applied to certain crops during bloom when pollinators may be present or when spray drift restrictions are in effect. Pollinator protection language and crop-specific rules will also be added to product labels.

The groups challenging the rule argue the EPA decision is "contrary to federal law and unsupported by substantial evidence."

"Honeybees and other pollinators are dying in droves because of insecticides like sulfoxaflor, yet the Trump administration removes restriction just to please the chemical industry," said Greg Loarie, Earthjustice attorney, in a statement. "This is illegal and an affront to our food system, economy, and environment."

This is the second lawsuit seeking to reverse the agency's decision. In August, the Center for Food Safety sued, arguing that EPA didn't follow the proper process under the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act, nor did it consult with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service to learn how endangered species may be affected.

An EPA spokesperson said the agency does not comment on pending litigation.

Sulfoxaflor was pulled from the market in 2015 after the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit said the agency failed to appropriately assess the pesticide's risk to pollinators. EPA then amended its guidelines in 2016 and forbid sulfoxaflor from being applied to crops attractive to bees and during bloom.

The agency's most recent assessment restored its use on citrus, cotton, cucurbits, soybeans and strawberries. EPA also approved new uses on alfalfa, corn, cacao, grains, pineapple, sorghum, teff, teosinte and tree plantations.

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